

**STATEMENT OF
SUSAN ESPIRITU DILKES
HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE
OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

February 15, 2007

Good Morning! First of all, I would like to thank the Veteran's Affair Committee Chairman Bob Filner, members of the committee and Congressman Bob Filner's staff for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Susan Espiritu Dilkes. I am the daughter of a Filipino World War II veteran and a member of the National Alliance for Filipino Veterans Equity. I am also, the Executive Director of Filipino American Service Group Inc. (FASGI), a non-profit community-based, and social service agency in Los Angeles County which was started in October 1981, when a homeless Filipino World War II veteran was found sleeping in the garage at the home of Mrs. Remedios Geaga, one of the founding members of our agency. Since then, FASGI has assisted thousands of Filipino American World War II veterans with temporary shelter, health and mental health issues, food distribution, and others. FASGI operates a transitional housing shelter for independent living for more than four hundred World War II veterans and in 1996, with the help of the Filipino American WWII veteran's volunteers, FASGI launched the FILVOTE, Filipino American Voters Mobilization, and has registered more than 13,000 Filipino Americans voters in Los Angeles County.

Last year, 2006, the Filipino-American Service Group, Inc. (FASGI) obtained a grant from State of California Department of Community Services and Development Community Services Block to outreach Filipino-American Veterans who are still alive and living in Los Angeles. The goal of the outreach is to reduce the risks of poor health resulting from inadequate housing, and to refer homeless Filipino American WWII Veterans to our shelter and to our Healthy Active Lifestyle Program (HALP) and to assist and to advocate for their Filipino American WWII Veterans for their benefits that were promised to them by the government of the U.S. in 1942 by Pres. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. For the pass twelve months, FASGI has worked at this outreach program but has referred only six WWII Filipino American veterans to our transitional housing shelter, because there are few of the veterans left. These men are now in there 80's and many are in very poor health.

If Congress does not act soon, there will be no one left. This is your last chance to correct a wrong, which is now more than half a century old. I believe you are men and women of good intention, and now it is time for those intentions to be converted into law.

Indeed, there are benefits beyond those that are visible on the face of this legislation. First, the passing of H.R. 760, granting full equity benefits for the Filipino American WWII veterans, provides the United States with an opportunity to rescue its reputation as a fair, honest and reputable country that honors its commitment. By helping the

remaining 5,000 Filipino American World War II veterans who are living in the United States. Our country can take a long step toward rescuing its own honor.

Second, passing HR 760, improves the foreign relations between the Philippines and the United States. It reduces the political irritation of an unfulfilled commitment to the 13,000 Filipino American World War II veterans who are living in the Philippines, and to the extent payment are made, it will improve flow of cash to the Philippines, a poor country in dire need of foreign support and liquidity.

This is the last chance any of us will have to RESCUE both the Filipino American World War II Veterans and the United States from a broken promise.

Thank you and please enact and promptly implement H.R. 760.